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Gorbachev's "Consolidation" (U)

Summary

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Gorbachev has introduced major institutional and policy changes since the beginning of the year that raise serious questions about his commitment to "reform." These changes are best interpreted neither as an attempt to move the USSR covertly toward social democracy, nor as an effort to institute benevolent dictatorship, but as elements in a strategy of political "consolidation." While this strategy incorporates certain progressive features, it basically represents an authoritarian drift in the manner in which Gorbachev has been posturing himself to deal with the Soviet Union's problems. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev's maneuvering is retarding creation of the infrastructure of democracy, impeding the emerging democratic forces in Soviet politics, and delaying establishment of effective parliamentary rule and responsible cabinet government. By so doing, it reduces the possibility for peaceful management of the explosive tensions latent in Soviet society. Gorbachev's coolness toward multiparty competition and commitment to a revived "vanguard" Communist Party may, at least in part, reflect an underestimation of the capabilities of the Soviet public. What the public does not want is a democratic process controlled and managed by Gorbachev, designed simply to support him and his evolving ideas. [REDACTED]

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This memorandum was prepared by [REDACTED] of the Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and questions are welcome and may be directed to [REDACTED]

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Recent Changes

This paper examines the significance of key changes that Gorbachev has initiated over the past six months. It then considers how the tougher approach displayed in what is termed "consolidation" is likely--if Gorbachev persists--to affect the solution of the major domestic economic, social, and political problems now confronting Moscow. Lastly, it considers the costs of "consolidation," the approach's likely impact on Gorbachev's upcoming choice of political strategy, and its possible consequences for Gorbachev's own power. [REDACTED]

Key Moves. Gorbachev has introduced major institutional and policy changes since the beginning of the year that raise basic questions about his political intentions. The approach he has adopted provides the framework within which he is now dealing with the accelerating radicalization and polarization of politics in the USSR--reflected, not least, in the recent emergence front center of Yel'tsin and the Russian Question. [REDACTED]

The steps Gorbachev has taken include:

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- Creation of a presidency that, while addressing the need in principle for stronger state executive authority and curtailment of the power of the party Politburo, vests Gorbachev with powers that are subject to only modest and uncertain limitations.
- Presentation of a draft Communist Party Rules that endorses limited democratization but also seeks to weaken Gorbachev's enemies in the party and reduce his accountability to a collegial leadership.
- Resistance toward efforts to abolish the traditional ban on "factional" activity in the Communist Party, and support for ousting leaders of the democratic wing of the party.
- Adoption of a harsh policy toward non-Russian secessionism.
- Symbolic courting of the political right and hostile treatment of the independent democratic opposition.
- Strengthening law enforcement and repressive capabilities of the regime. [REDACTED]

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Two Interpretations. One interpretation of these changes is that they are a phase in a publicly unacknowledged campaign on Gorbachev's part to move the Soviet Union toward social democracy. Gorbachev's intention, so it might be argued, is to weaken the Communist Party and shift power to a democratized "state." What appears to be a drift toward authoritarianism is either an attempt in fact to defend nascent "reform," or tactical accommodation to pressures from the right. Gorbachev makes tactical retreats in the knowledge that the tide of pressure from below released by *glasnost* and political competition will wash away the defenses of the right and facilitate his intended progression toward the left. [REDACTED]

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A different interpretation argues, at the extreme, that Gorbachev is moving toward benevolent dictatorship. This view would concede that Gorbachev's own subjective intentions may not be dictatorial. Yet, so it is argued, what we see emerging in reality is the reassertion of a historical pattern of autocracy generated by an attempt to deal with the crisis of Communism and threatening collapse of the Russian empire. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev himself describes his aim as "consolidation," a circumlocution that more aptly describes his intentions, perhaps, than what he has managed to achieve. [REDACTED]

"Consolidation"

As *glasnost* and *demokratizatsiya* began to bear fruit during 1989 in the form of intensified debate within the ranks of the Communist Party, the emergence of oppositional political groups, a wave of strike activity, and increased ethnic violence and national assertiveness, Gorbachev began to emphasize the need for "consolidation" in Soviet society. First stressed in a broad global sense, the priority of consensus, cohesion, and conflict reduction was then extended by Gorbachev specifically to the political process--mirroring growing societal fragmentation and strife, and increasingly vocal criticism within the party of his own stewardship. The changes cited above that Gorbachev has introduced this year fit within the context of "consolidation," reflecting in their detail Gorbachev's ambivalent approach to what he terms political "reform." [REDACTED]

Political Goals. Political reform, according to Gorbachev's draft party program, seeks to eliminate the influence of dogmatic Marxism-Leninism on Soviet life. And Gorbachev has done much to achieve this objective. Yet his talk about politics, private as well as public, still incorporates the fundamental assumption that there is one objectively "correct" policy--namely his own policy, *perestroika*. What is debatable is only how the policy should best be implemented. Here, Gorbachev's ego looms large: he clearly visualizes himself as the *vox perestroika*, while asserting that his opponents or competitors (like Yel'tsin) are driven by base "egoism" and selfish "political" motives. [REDACTED]

Exerting Control in a Competitive Political Environment. Gorbachev has not renounced *glasnost*, his political innovation that has revolutionized Soviet life. Nor has he disowned the principle of political "pluralism." And both of these phenomena have developed their own powerful autonomous dynamic. But his acceptance of multiparty politics has been a less-than-enthusiastic effort to keep up with the proliferation of informal groups and protoparties engendered by *glasnost* and earlier encouragement of nonpartisan electoral competition. From his standpoint, an organized, multiparty competitive political environment is currently part of the problem he will have to deal with, not part of the solution. [REDACTED]

For Gorbachev, the solution lies first in a radical restructuring and restaffing of the Communist Party that sloughs off the party's old managerial functions while equipping it to play a dominant role in the emerging competitive political environment. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Gorbachev created the office of President to make himself relatively independent of the Politburo, Central Committee, and the party in general. Yet he realizes that the presidency alone provides a weak power base from which to influence the government bureaucracy, which is staffed almost entirely with party members. The only way in which meaningful reforms can be instituted for the foreseeable future-- [REDACTED] is by means of de facto one-party rule within a formal multiparty setting. To circumvent or undermine rule by the CPSU would jeopardize his program of *perestroika*. Within the

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party, [REDACTED] his own power base lying specifically in the party apparatus--despite the fact that [REDACTED] the greatest danger to his personal power to lie on the right. If the party were to split before or at the July party congress, this would also split the party apparatus--thus destroying its effectiveness and undermining his own power base. His main concern, therefore, is to prevent a split in the party at the congress that would--[REDACTED] probably result in the collapse of the CPSU. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev is clearly not putting all his eggs in the Communist Party basket, as creation of the state presidency unambiguously demonstrates. But he is banking to a considerable degree--futile though this might appear to some observers--on stabilizing and "reforming" the party. The "vanguard" party he has in mind will engage in electoral competition like any "parliamentary" party but will also seek continuously to affect broad policy positions and personnel appointments by exerting influence over party members who work in key organizations throughout Soviet society. The draft party rules Gorbachev has put forward for adoption at the 28th CPSU congress attempt to prevent further "federalization" of the party, maintain a hierarchical organizational structure and party apparatus (by reassertion of the principle of "democratic centralism"), and preserve the possibility of exerting direct lateral political influence through retention of party units in workplaces and bureaucratic organizations like the military and security forces (by retaining the so-called "territorial-production principle" of structuring the party). By encouraging "democratization" of party elections in the draft rules while reasserting the traditional ban on organized "factionalism" and by replacing the Politburo and General Secretary with a new "Presidium" and "Chairman," Gorbachev is attempting to weaken the power of opponents of his views in the party apparatus while reducing his own need to negotiate with and be accountable to a collegial leadership. [REDACTED]

At the tactical level, Gorbachev has attempted to influence and constrain the process of interest articulation along the lines implied by the goal of "consolidation." He has openly tried to remove the editor of one independent-minded newspaper and sought to orient the press in general toward adoption of a still critical but more "constructive" posture. [REDACTED]

Ambivalence Toward the Democratic Selection of Leaders. Gorbachev has in principle strongly backed competitive elections in both the Communist Party and the soviets. Without this support we would almost surely not be seeing the opening-up of Soviet politics that has occurred over the past year. Yet in both the state and party electoral processes he has attempted to maintain barriers against full democracy, preferring instead a process that can be managed from above to some extent. Thus, he has resisted the institutionalization of nonofficial group activities that would provide the basis for broad, nonatomized influence from below over the selection of leaders. He seeks to retain Communist Party influence over personnel appointments. In the staffing of both the proposed party Presidium and the new Presidential Council, co-optation of members plays

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a key role. And he himself has now twice failed to subject his own selection as leader of the Soviet state to the test of direct popular election, preferring instead the safe but flawed legitimization of uncompetitive validation by a partly nondemocratically elected congress of People's Deputies. [REDACTED]

Trying To Assure Knowledgeable One-Man Rule. A central difference between Gorbachev and his predecessors has been his recognition that policy must be based on accurate assessment of reality, and his appreciation that bureaucracy has an enormous capacity to distort communication of this reality to policymakers. He has strongly encouraged the ventilation of opposed policy views, openness of decisionmakers to "inputs" from below, and discussion of policy issues. And this sensitivity to the information requirements of effective decisionmaking is reflected in his structuring of both the presidency, with its two councils, and the proposed new party Central Committee and Presidium. [REDACTED]

The thrust of these reforms, nevertheless, is to strengthen rather than dilute one-man rule; and Gorbachev himself has justified his continued simultaneous occupancy of the top state and party leadership posts on the grounds of preventing dyarchy. In practice, then, what the restructuring changes may do is to bring greater expertise to bear on decisionmaking--whether this is the technocratic expertise of an economist like Shatalin in the Presidential Council, or the knowledge of ethnic interests of a republic first secretary participating in the proposed party Presidium. Gorbachev's objective is--through dialogue in these new forums--to build consensus for his own policy decisions and to ensure that they incorporate those compromises demanded by reality. But he still makes the decisions. The process, in his view, should not be one of pressure-group advocacy, bargaining, and alliance formation--all of which he pejoratively describes as "politics." [REDACTED]

The Availability of Coercive Measures To Implement Policy. Gorbachev realizes the need to gain public acceptance of his policies and to avoid the "solution" of social conflicts through resort to physical violence. He spends much of his own time attempting to shape public opinion. Yet the formal powers he has gained through introduction of the presidency incorporate strong elements of unilateralism and the application of coercion. They give him far-reaching authority to issue decrees, repress informal organizations (including ethnic and labor as well as political groups), control undesired actions on the part of local authorities, and impose various forms of extraordinary rule--constrained only by some loosely framed constitutional restrictions. [REDACTED]

In practice, Gorbachev seems to be attempting to legitimize the use of these powers--whether in the context of Lithuania, economic reform, agriculture, or other policy areas--by invoking the fact of discussion of their application at meetings of the Federal or Presidential Councils, or joint meetings of both. The stress here is very much on appearances--on pseudocollegial decisionmaking. Because the Presidential Council is not vested with decisional authority (and in fact does not make policy decisions), and because its membership collectively is not subject to parliamentary approval or accountability, it does not enjoy the authenticity or representative legitimacy of cabinet government. [REDACTED]

The Meaning of "Consolidation." Gorbachev's "consolidation," described above, is not a strategy of "backing into" social democracy. It could be viewed as a reflection of profound ambivalence toward democracy as such--perhaps a testimonial to Gorbachev's role as a transitional, predemocratic leader of the USSR. Yet "consolidation" also does not translate into actual authoritarian rule, much less benevolent dictatorship, because

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Gorbachev personally sees force as the last resort and prefers to employ it to the minimal extent possible, and because in any event he is deficient in the actual capacity to impose his policies coercively on a society increasingly driven by its own dynamics and unresponsive to command from the Kremlin. For the time being at least, "consolidation" represents an authoritarian drift in the manner that Gorbachev has been posturing himself to deal with the Soviet Union's most fundamental problems. [REDACTED]

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"Consolidation" and Problem Solving

Declining Popular Support. Gorbachev faces the problem of increasing popular alienation from the existing Soviet system, produced in the first instance by the system's economic failure and inability to control crime and ethnic disorder. [REDACTED]

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Alienation is reflected in concentrated form in public attitudes toward the Communist Party. Concern over the steep erosion of popular support for the party is frequently voiced by party officials, and public opinion data confirm the reality of this problem.¹ There is declining support for the party even from its own membership; party officials observe with dismay an increase over the past year in resignations--and disproportionately, it is claimed, among working-class members. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev's problem, however, is not simply withdrawal of support from the party; it is active rising anger directed at the party. What we are seeing--in slower motion than in Eastern Europe--is a growing anti-Communist revolution. Actual hostility toward party membership, and especially toward the party apparatus, is blurred in much of the reporting, but it is a powerful reality. A strike committee leader in Donetsk concisely expresses an extreme form of this mood: "Resignation of the obkom in its entirety, and immediately--that is the minimum for the relaxation of tension. And the maximum is an unfolding of events as in Romania. . . ." The local rebellions against a number of oblast party bureaus this past winter reflected a fusion of antiparty sentiment and convictions of deep social injustice. And probably the single most potent grievance fueling the sense of injustice is corruption--a potent force in East European anti-Communist revolutions over the past year. The link between corruption and antiregime sentiment accounts for the extraordinary mass resonance of the case involving the two anticorruption crusaders, Gdlyan and Ivanov, as well as for Establishment sensitivity toward their charges. [REDACTED]

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¹ A February 1990 nationwide survey of the population's assessment of the CPSU revealed the following: 80 percent of respondents felt the party's prestige was declining; the percentage of those who totally mistrusted the party had grown from 23 percent in March 1989 to 35 percent; nearly half believed the party had lost the initiative and had no appreciable influence on social changes; 51 percent said the CPSU's aims as expressed in its program were either unattainable or had lost their topicality; over 60 percent fully or partially agreed that the party had led the country along a wrong path; almost 90 percent said that its errors had arrested the country's development; and only 6 percent believed that the actions of party officials at the workplace level reflected the will and opinion of the rank and file. (Moscow News No.15, 15 April 1990) [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev's hard line toward the Balts may have won the regime a temporary measure of support in some quarters, as may the measures he has taken to beef up the struggle against crime. But, basically, it is difficult to see how the changes he has made in the political process will produce a lasting increase in regime support. They do nothing to fill the ideological vacuum; they probably do not add much to the legitimacy of the political structures; and they will certainly intensify ethnic disaffection and alienation of liberal democratic forces. By impeding the formation of the sociopolitical infrastructure of democracy, they increase the likelihood of a violent outcome of the anti-Communist revolution. [REDACTED]

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The Weakening of Government. For the last year, Prime Minister Ryzhkov has repeatedly called attention to the declining capacity of Moscow to govern the Soviet Union; and, indeed, this is a basic problem. Reduction in the party's managerial functions and capabilities dictated by Gorbachev has seriously weakened the core integrating element of rule at all levels of the system. Collective leadership in the Politburo has continued to produce stalemate, feckless compromise, or policy swings not sustained at the top leadership level. Meanwhile, the rise of the congress of People's Deputies/Supreme Soviet has undercut the Council of Ministers without producing effective parliamentary rule or true cabinet government. Policy implementation by the central bureaucracies is frustrated by decay of the command economy and a semi-decentralization of power to enterprises and localities; but the latter, in turn, lack the resources to cope with their expanded responsibilities. [REDACTED]

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If Gorbachev is persistent, his use of the new Presidential powers may help to overcome stalemate in policymaking produced by the format of collegial decisionmaking in the party Politburo and Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. The presidency does provide a mechanism in principle for imposing greater orderliness on the policy process, more integration of policies, and tighter deadlines--and, with the reduction of Central Committee apparatus functions, this is clearly needed. Presidential authority may help to facilitate policy implementation in a limited number of areas; it cannot, of course, impose top priority across the board. But if Gorbachev is indecisive, the collegiality problem may simply regenerate itself in debates in the new Presidential Council and party Presidium. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev's strategy of restoring dynamism through creation of a new type of Communist Party "vanguard" oriented toward broad policy development and personnel placement is almost certainly doomed to failure. But its attempted implementation will perpetuate dyarchy between the party apparatus and the soviet/government structure, especially at levels below the Center where control is not fused in one individual--thus weakening the rooting of democratic rule. By siding with the traditionalists who seek to retain the so-called "territorial-production" structure of the party, which organizes individual party members in party cells by place of work, Gorbachev may buy some current support on the right--but at the risk of reinforcing conservatism at the base of Soviet society, shoring up resistance to marketization by maintaining extraparliamentary party intervention in economic decisionmaking by production units, and stoking anti-Communist revolution in every workplace, once the cry for "depoliticization" rises and non-Communist political parties begin demanding equal treatment. [REDACTED]

On the state side, in the absence of a developed social, organizational, and legal infrastructure of support for the Supreme Soviet/congress of People's Deputies, establishment of an authoritarian presidency is likely to jeopardize the transformation of these elective bodies into effective parliamentary assemblies. The appearance of the

President, with his pseudorepresentative and underlegitimated Presidential Council and Council of Federation, will further weaken the Council of Ministers as a center of executive power but will not institutionalize responsible cabinet government. Nor will Gorbachev's changes alone improve local government, which depends basically on liquidating central bureaucratic controls and gaining tax-based resources directly from producers--neither of which will happen in the absence of serious economic reform.

[REDACTED]

Delay in Instituting Economic Reform. A number of factors explain the slow pace of economic reform. These include:

- Fundamental divisions among Soviet leaders over the scope, character, and timing of reform--as reflected constantly in Ligachev's speeches.
- Assignment of responsibility for planning reform to Ryzhkov and his ministerial barons, whose concept of the desired change has been limited and gradual.
- Resistance to reform in many quarters: the congress of People's Deputies/Supreme Soviet, the official trade unions, the right wing of the Communist Party, and some popular pressure groups and emerging political parties.
- Gorbachev's own superficial understanding of the complex issues involved.
- Conflicting advice to Gorbachev from the specialists to whom he turns.

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But it appears that the paramount obstacle to reform remains what it has been for at least the last two years: Gorbachev's fear that reform will set off a revolutionary reaction by the public. Gorbachev advisers, like Abalkin, publicly argue that the current Soviet regime does not enjoy sufficient public trust to follow the Polish path.

[REDACTED]

The creation of the presidency may help in some ways to advance economic reform. It may permit the objections of some leaders like Ligachev, and the reservations of others, like Ryzhkov, to be overridden. It may permit some bypassing of centers of resistance, including those in the congress of People's Deputies/Supreme Soviet and the official trade unions. It may facilitate faster generation of a more coherent, internally consistent reform plan. And use of the president's decree powers may allow a more decisive reaction to complications that will arise during implementation of reform. These would not be negligible gains.

[REDACTED]

Nevertheless, Gorbachev's enhanced juridical authority has not altered the essence of the reform problem: his own fear of the public response. Having secured presidential "powers," Gorbachev has already recoiled from action, suggesting to the public through vague exhortation about "markets" that he still does not really know where he is going, while exciting fear of price increases and making promises of pain relief that he will not be able to keep. Neither use of presidential decrees nor "consensus building" through the presidential councils will enhance the legitimacy of reform decisions; they need all the real democratic authorization they can get. Employment of these presidential mechanisms, however, will tend to isolate Gorbachev as the perceived source of popular suffering.

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The Decline in Public Order. Failure to arrest declining living standards, nonfulfillment of Moscow's promises to respond to earlier strike demands, and the contagion of spiraling intercommunal violence are likely in the near future to further tax the regime's capability to maintain public order. There is a good chance of large-scale strikes this summer. While MVD forces available to put down violence are growing, they are now thinly stretched, and the reliability of military forces if used against Slavic populations would be highly questionable. [REDACTED]

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This is one area in which Gorbachev's "consolidation" ought to produce tangible results. It could facilitate a more coordinated mobilization of capabilities to deal with disorder and violence. By concentrating the authority to employ force domestically in the hands of one leader, it should strengthen the speed and responsiveness of decisionmaking. It might stiffen the resolve of the security forces, and perhaps reduce fear on the part of the military of being targeted for public opprobrium by participating in the suppression of internal disorder. It should win points for Gorbachev among those in the population who crave "order." [REDACTED]

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Naturally, more force will not affect the underlying conditions that generate disorder. And the possibly easier availability of armed coercion will not necessarily overcome Gorbachev's demonstrated reluctance to tempt fate by using it--especially if its use risks horizontal escalation of violence in Russia and the Ukraine. If he does significantly increase physical repression, this is more likely to radicalize than pacify the groups affected. One outcome could be the spread of terrorism. A failure by military forces to carry out orders could sharply accelerate the anti-Communist revolution. [REDACTED]

Ethnic Fragmentation. Notwithstanding important differences among the republics, one may hazard some generalizations about the nationality problem that now confronts Moscow. In all republics, nationalism has undergone a qualitative radicalization over the past year. In a number of the non-Russian republics, the intensity and traumatic character of developments have almost certainly alienated their populations from Russia for the foreseeable future. For many non-Russians, independence is no longer a remote fugitive dream, but a presently achievable goal. Secession or fundamental renegotiation of the terms of association with Russia are now part of people's mental furniture. Where hostility between non-Russian nationalities has been the pattern, as in the Caucasus and Central Asia, hatred has now come to be directed at Russia too. In some areas, especially Central Asia, the potential for mass anti-Russian violence and a stepped-up flight of Russian refugees is probably high. [REDACTED]

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In the Russian Republic, pressure to create a real Russian state that will look to the interests of Russia itself after three-quarters of a century of national disaster is strong not only on the right, but among all elites and within the population at large--although views differ on the desirability of maintaining the Soviet Russian empire. Among party members, support for the formation of a separate Communist Party of Russia is also no monopoly of the right. It seems virtually certain now that there will soon be a strengthened Russian state and a Russian Communist Party, with only the question of their respective degrees of authority remaining to be determined. Whatever ideological complexion it assumes, the Russian Question will constitute a serious long-term "Yugoslavization" challenge to the viability of any supranational Soviet state, and perhaps a short-term challenge even to Gorbachev's own preeminence, depending on how Yel'tsin fares. The broadly shared desire among Russians to cut "subsidies" to other republics will

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impact most severely on the non-Slavic republics--especially the Central Asian. And overt articulation of Russian nationalism will further erode the foundations of non-Russian elite loyalty to the Center. [REDACTED]

On some occasions Gorbachev has held out the prospect of independence or confederal status for some nationalities. [REDACTED]

Against this type of behavior must be weighed his dogged endorsement of a new, "true" federalism, which he still gives evidence of believing can induce voluntary adherence by all non-Russian republics (largely on the grounds of rational economic calculation), statements he has made about the likely catastrophic civil violence waiting to be unleashed throughout the USSR by secessionism, and his evident failure simply to grasp the primordial desire of many non-Russians for national independence. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev's tough line in practice toward the Balts may have had a temporary deterrent impact on secessionism, although so far it seems to have affected only the style of the Latvians' and Estonians' attempted exit. It may also have bought Gorbachev a little goodwill among resident nonnatives and military-political-security elites appalled by the prospective collapse of the empire--although their suspicions of Gorbachev have probably been strengthened by his recent meetings with Lithuanian leaders. The consultative forums Gorbachev has provided non-Russian leaders through the presidential Council of Federation and the proposed party Presidium could be employed by these leaders as more visible, prestigious platforms from which to express their needs and demands--which in turn could provide Gorbachev with a counterweight to more hostile Russian groups. [REDACTED]

But Gorbachev's firmness is not likely, as the hardliners may hope, to "beat sense" into the non-Russians interested in independence. And it may well fail, contrary to Gorbachev's evident strategy, to create conditions for negotiations on his own terms by seriously splitting the secessionist leadership. If Gorbachev steps up intimidation, the effect will probably be to further radicalize the Balts, reduce the likelihood of obtaining a "reasonable" civilian negotiating partner that will be obeyed by the indigenous population, increase the likelihood of violence between Balts and local Russians, and narrow the possibility of avoiding direct military rule. [REDACTED]

At the same time, Gorbachev's moves--the secession law, the "national equality" law,³ the law on Baltic economic "autonomy," the law on economic relations between the Center and the republics, the law establishing the respective powers of the Center and the republics, and, of course, the pressure tactics against the Balts--have probably reduced the

2 [REDACTED]

³ The 2 April 1990 USSR "Law on Enhanced Responsibility for Encroachment on the National Equality of Citizens and Forcible Violation of the Integrity of USSR Territory" authorizes severe fines and imprisonment for leaders of organizations whose activity is "aimed at kindling ethnic or racial hostility, strife, or contempt or at using violence on ethnic, racial, or religious grounds, and also their activity aimed directly at the forcible violation of the integrity of the USSR's territory or the territory of union and autonomous republics, autonomous oblasts or okrugs as enshrined in the USSR Constitution." [REDACTED]

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credibility in the eyes of other nationalities of Gorbachev's promise of a real federalism based on a new treaty of union and serious demarcation of republic and federal powers. Whatever Gorbachev's ultimate intentions may be, his visible moves are unlikely to promote flexibility by Russians in dealing with the demands of non-Russians. Within the Communist Party his maneuvering could accelerate the split of the party along ethnic lines in some of the non-Russian republics, strengthen the formation of nationalist parties, and reduce or further marginalize the integrative capability of republic branches of the CPSU.

[REDACTED]

Gorbachev and his allies appear fully aware of the enormous potential threat to the stability and continued existence of the Union posed by the emergence of a powerful Russian center, and they attempted first to block or delay this development. Having apparently failed, their strategy now must be to attempt to tame the tiger somehow; but their efforts so far seem ineffectual. Where a genuinely democratic approach to the Union issue might provide a way for Gorbachev to cope with the Russian Question, his authoritarian drift tends to place him in a defensive-reactive posture and reduce his ability to shape a less violent long-term restructuring of the Soviet empire.

[REDACTED]

Implications

Gorbachev confronts a rising danger of economic breakdown, the growth of potentially convulsive societal polarization and radicalization, ethnic fragmentation, and a slide toward disintegration of Soviet rule--all of which are underpinned by an evolving anti-Communist revolution. His authoritarian drift is, in part, an attempt to appease his critics on the right. But it is not a posture that has been simply "dictated" to him by the military, the KGB, or traditionalists in the party; nor is it an esoteric "one step backward" maneuver in a covert design to implant social democracy in the USSR. Gorbachev still has considerable discretionary leeway, and he has chosen to move to the right both because he sees his declining popularity impeding his own capacity to compete in an open political environment and because he too fears the "chaos" building and seeks to contain it.

[REDACTED]

Strategic Losses. If Gorbachev persists in his current "consolidation" mode, this is likely at best to produce tactical gains at the expense of high costs for political opportunities forgone and potentially heavy strategic losses for the Soviet people. The latter include:

- Retarding formation of the social, cultural, and organizational underpinnings of democracy.
- Weakening the emerging democratic elites in Soviet society.
- Delaying the emergence of effective parliamentary rule and responsible cabinet government.
- Increasing the likelihood of a protracted and potentially explosive divestiture of power by the Communist Party.
- Introducing economic reform in a manner that is short on legitimacy and democratic authorization, reducing the chances that it will stick.
- Heightening the likelihood of escalating violence in ethnic confrontations.

- Gearing up to cope with civil unrest in a manner likely to radicalize the population, increase violence and, possibly, spread terrorism.

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These are losses that could affect the United States as well. While it is certainly conceivable that a violent revolutionary upheaval in the USSR could produce a democratic outcome, the chances are probably as great--if not greater--that it would produce either a return to dictatorship and a more hostile foreign policy, or persistence of an internationally destabilizing maelstrom of bloodshed and civil war. [REDACTED]

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In assessing the prospects for "chaos," Gorbachev may be focusing his attention on the erosion of his own popularity and on the possible outcome of the anti-Communist revolution. Soviet public opinion polls, the recent election victories of democratic forces in Moscow, Leningrad, and other cities and election losses of the far right, [REDACTED] suggest that there is more potential popular acceptance of peaceful democratic change, economic reform, and even secession of non-Russian republics, than Western analysts or Gorbachev himself may have expected. The popular appeal of Yel'tsin's program, with its nonimperialistic Russian nationalism, is evidence of this potential. What the public does not want is a democratic process controlled and managed by Gorbachev simply to support him and his program. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev's Upcoming Strategic Choice. Within the next several months, as the Russian Question bears in on the Kremlin, as the 28th congress of the CPSU allocates power within the party and copes with internal schism, and as the democratic forces in major cities struggle for control with the party apparatus traditionalists and the central bureaucracy, Gorbachev will face a critical choice of strategic direction. In an environment of growing polarization and incipient collapse of the Center, Gorbachev could opt for deepening democracy. The elements of such a choice might include:

- Acceptance of real reform in the Communist Party: abolition of the principle of "democratic centralism" and the central role of the party apparatus; elimination of the ban on "factional" activity by party members; the organizing of party members by electoral constituencies and liquidation of party units in workplaces and bureaucratic hierarchies; and provision for ethnic "federalization" of the party.
- A political alliance with democratic forces in the Russian Republic--expressed in a personal rapprochement between Gorbachev and Yel'tsin.
- Sponsorship of cooperative relations between the central authorities and democratically controlled local government bodies.
- Abandonment of pressure tactics toward the Baltic republics, revocation of legislative measures predetermining relationships between the USSR and the constituent national republics, and inauguration of a process designed to produce a truly voluntary treaty of ethnic union (or disassociation). [REDACTED]

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Alternatively, Gorbachev could opt to turn further toward the right. The moves here might include more vigorous use of the coercive powers vested in the presidency, active support for a purge of Democratic Platform adherents from the Communist Party, an attempted political alliance with a chauvinistically minded Communist Party of Russia,

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attempts to undermine local governments controlled by the democrats, and a tightening of the screws on the Balts and other would-be secessionists. [REDACTED]

If the argument presented in this paper is correct, it would clearly be in the US interest--and possibly his own--for Gorbachev to really "go democratic." Some of his advisers have reportedly been urging him to follow such a course of action. Whatever the situation may have been several years ago, trading democracy for "stability" is now a deeply flawed option. The chances are, however, that he will not do so--at least not in the consistent way that we would like to see. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev almost certainly thinks there still are possibilities for maintaining a Center despite growing political polarization, and it is conceivable that for awhile he may be right. The strategy toward Communist Party "reform" embodied in his draft party program and rules is fundamentally at odds with the Democratic Platform's design for a "parliamentary party." From the standpoint of stability and liberal reform there would seem to be a powerful case to be made for a rapprochement between Gorbachev and the left--and, indeed, there are signs of preliminary maneuvering on both sides following Yel'tsin's victory. Gorbachev may believe that support from the Russian Republic leadership for economic reform could move the process forward and spread responsibility for unpleasant actions. Yet Yel'tsin's push for Russian Republic sovereignty and his support for Lithuania--however compatible they may be in principle with Gorbachev's more philosophic musings about possible long-term differentiated federal/confederal relations between national republics and Moscow--are fundamentally at odds with Gorbachev's current goals and strategy of dealing with the nationality question. It is extremely doubtful that Gorbachev is prepared psychologically or politically to "get ahead" of ethnic disintegration by asking the republics: "Which of you would like to unite in some sort of confederal union?" On a personal level, Gorbachev's willingness in general to share power with other individual leaders, much less align the Soviet "all-union" state with a single republic (even the Russian Republic) is highly suspect. Powerful mutual antagonism and competition between Gorbachev and Yel'tsin are probably complemented by visceral distrust by Gorbachev of the liberal politicians. [REDACTED]

At the same time, Gorbachev is also unlikely to embrace a radical turn toward the right. He is certainly aware that his fiercest political enemies lie on this flank, and that with the most extreme of these there would be little prospect of reconciliation. Temperamentally and politically, he has demonstrated an inclination to avoid the use of physical force where this has been possible. He would not be convincing as a spokesman for Russian chauvinism. And almost certainly he is looking for a compromise with the Balts that would avert any domino effect but still not undercut *perestroika* and accommodate Soviet foreign policy and trade interests. [REDACTED]

The likeliest course of action for Gorbachev, consequently, is a continued attempt to pursue "consolidation" and to maintain a "Center." In the near term, this strategy would display itself in moves at the upcoming party congress to carry through the projected structural changes in the party, remove as many traditionalist opponents as he can from leading party posts, retain as much of the mass membership of the party as possible, and get rid of irreconcilably oppositionist leftist leaders. With Yel'tsin and an assertive Russian Republic government, Gorbachev's relations are likely to be combative.

Likewise, in dealing with the Baltic problem Gorbachev will probably continue to seek to create conditions for a "political" resolution of the problem on his own terms by wearing down public resistance and splitting the local leadership. [REDACTED]

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Gorbachev's Personal Power. Gorbachev's persistence with "consolidation" could severely increase the vulnerability of his own position--primarily because of the ineffectiveness of this approach in dealing with fundamental policy problems and its inadequacy in shoring up political support. His authoritarian drift may alleviate some pressures on him from the right in the Politburo, Central Committee, and military. But it is unlikely to mollify the hardcore opposition from this quarter, which believes that a political war to the death is now under way in the USSR and that Gorbachev is in the way or on the wrong side. At the same time, Gorbachev is weakening his more natural base of support among democratic elites. Probably he will not succeed in averting fractionization of the CPSU at the 28th congress, notwithstanding his likely attempt to peel off just the Democratic Platform leaders from the party. This outcome could mortgage his future to the failing political force that he himself, paradoxically, has done so much to undermine--a basically traditionalist CPSU apparatus. [REDACTED]

Gorbachev's greatest personal vulnerability in all arenas--the Politburo, the Central Committee, and the Supreme Soviet/congress of People's Deputies--lies at the crossover point where fear of his continued rule on the part of moderate (not just traditionalist) elements in these bodies comes to outweigh fear of possible reprisal against individuals who actively "conspire" against him, fear of a violent popular backlash against his replacement, or fear of a rightwing takeover. The KGB leadership, as long as it continues to cast its lot with Gorbachev, may be able to influence the reprisal element of the equation. [REDACTED]

But the basic contingencies likely to affect the fear calculus would appear to be two. First, the eruption of widespread strikes or mass violence could render such calculations irrelevant. Or, second, Gorbachev's popular standing could plummet to such a level that his removal might become a matter of indifference to the public. Further consumer distress could produce such a result. Gorbachev's increasing efforts to rebut rumors of personal corruption and his public endorsement of a Stalinist-type draft bill to protect the "dignity" of the President suggest still another scenario that should also not be ignored. The ineffectiveness of Gorbachev's "consolidation" and its authoritarian approach in coping with fundamental Soviet problems in a period of rapid political polarization is steadily increasing the likelihood of one or the other of these contingencies. [REDACTED]

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